

CHAPTER 3: MOTIVATION



شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى
وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى
لَفُضِّي بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ ۖ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ ۖ وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ ۖ
وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۖ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ
بَيْنَنَا ۖ وَالِيهِ الْمَصِيرُ

He has ordained for you the same Deen (way of life - Islam)
which He enjoined on Nuh - and which We have revealed to
you O Muhammad - and which We enjoined on Ibrahim and

Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus): "Establish the Deen of Al-Islam and make no division (sects) in it." Intolerable for the mushrikin is that to which you O Muhammad call them. Allah chooses for His service whom He wills, and guides to His Way only those who turn to Him in repentance.

And they were not divided until after the knowledge came unto them, through rivalry among themselves; and had it not been for a Word that had already gone forth from thy Lord for an appointed term, it surely had been judged between them. And those who were made to inherit the Scripture after them are verily in hopeless doubt concerning it.

So for that reason, invite them [to the true Deen] and stay firm on the Right Way as you are commanded and do not follow their vain desires. Tell them: "I believe in whatever Allah has revealed from the Book and I am commanded to do justice between you. Allah is Our Rabb and your Rabb. We are responsible for Our deeds and you for yours. Let there be no dispute among us. Allah will bring us all together on the Day of Judgement and decide as to who is right and who is wrong. Towards Him lies the goal.

(Quran 42:13-15)

A LESSON OF MOTIVATION FROM THE SUNNAH

We will now discuss about what should motivate you and me to volunteer. What should motivate us to do this work? I'm

going to take a passage from Surah Shuraa and discuss how it instructs us about establishing Allah's deen.

The Prophet ﷺ had basically three major audiences besides the Muslims:

- The Mushrikoon, i.e.. the idol worshippers of Makkah,
- Jewish tribes, and
- Christian communities.

Both of the last two groups were called the Ahl-ul kitab in the Quran. Prophet ﷺ was making efforts to communicate the message of Islam to all these three groups. There were hordes of people around the messenger ﷺ that were discouraging him from this work. All of us know the effect discouragement can have on a person when people discourage a productive activity you are doing by saying things like 'Why are you even bothering', 'What's the point in that?' 'You are wasting your time', and so on and so forth. When you hear that over and over again, it can have a detrimental effect on your motivation. It can wear down your motivation. That's just a human thing.

With regards the Prophet ﷺ, it was his own family members and elders, who were at the forefront to discourage and de-rail the effort. It were also the knowledgeable people of the Jews and Christians that were becoming a source of discouragement.

But in the verses I am about to share with you, the discouragement does not seem to be coming from them; rather one might think that it is coming from Allah swt Himself. He says, 'it's too big a deal for the people of shirk to accept what you are calling them to. It is too heavy for them'. Now if somebody else was telling the Prophet ﷺ, he might not be de-motivated because his high stature is too high and honourable to be bothered about that. But who is saying it to him here? It is Allah Himself. Allah is saying to him 'It's too hard for them to accept what you are calling them to.'

كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ

Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them... (Quran 42: 13)

But the next part of the ayah answers him.

اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ

... Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him] (Quran 42: 13)

Allah is the one who selects towards him who he wants! And He guides towards him who turns to him! If we analyze this a little bit, the first apparent de-motivation is that the people of shirk have no experience with the book. They have no previous prophets. They have no knowledge about the

akhirah or the hereafter. All of this is new for them. So it is too hard for them to accept the message of Islam.

So, now the Prophet's ﷺ hopes turn toward the people that have knowledge and there were prophets sent to them along with the books - the Jews and Christians. Supposedly they are a better hope because they have knowledge. The next verse says,

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ

'And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them'.

So, even knowledge was not able to bring them to truth. On contrary, knowledge itself became the reason for them rejecting the truth as they used it as a means of 'power', and as a mean to further their ends or worldly goals. Knowledge to them was a weapon or tool and when they owned it they had control and authority. They did not want to transfer that authority to others by transferring them the knowledge.

Before moving further, let us discuss an important lesson regarding knowledge and how it is supposed to be used and then we will come back to the passage under discussion again.

DUAL NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE:

The knowledge has a dual nature when it comes to collective Islamic work such as Dawah. This is one of the major areas of Islamic work and it does require knowledge.

Using knowledge as a source of power

You can't be teaching somebody if you don't have knowledge yourself. Let us discuss an example to understand the dual nature of knowledge that we are talking about.

Suppose, there is a person who has knowledge, he is teaching, he has a following and there are people listening to him; and somebody else comes along and apparently, they have more knowledge than you him. With all this, his audience has started to slip away. And he is wondering "what's happening? That guy took all my crowd! So, maybe, I should prove to people with my knowledge that the guy they are looking forward to, is really no good and they should really stay with me". Now this knowledgeable person, who is supposed to be sharing knowledge for the sake of Allah, is now using that knowledge as a weapon to hold onto his market-share, if I put it crudely. It seems like it is a commercial and materialistic exercise.

We need to understand that the knowledge of the Torah and Injeel at the time of the Prophet ﷺ were made exclusive and classified information by their keepers. Not 'any' Christian or

Jew knew about the Bible or the Torah. Only the scholars of these faiths knew about these books. Their philosophy was that 'if you want to know about your religion, better come to us'. So, in such context, Prophet ﷺ comes along and he's making the knowledge of Allah's book available to everybody. He is challenging the status quo and he is teaching the book to every companion of his and anyone who wants to understand his noble message. His sunnah is to spread the knowledge and not confine it.

Manipulating others because of one's knowledge

The other thing about knowledge is that it can also be misused if there are mal-intentions. For example, let us suppose you have a problem with your car and you go to a mechanic. He has come to know that you know nothing about cars. Problem to your solution was a simple oil change and he says to you that, 'you need a new fan belt, and your gearbox is also breathing its last and needs replacement. Your engine is weak and the list goes on and on. Is there any way to find out if he is lying or telling the truth? No. You have to trust him because you don't know and he knows. He can make hell lot of money from your ignorance.

So, when knowledge is in the hands of a one or two or a few, is there a possibility that they can use it to take advantage of others people? Certainly.

But, if I have reasonable knowledge about cars, I can challenge the mechanic and ask “what are you talking about? Show me the fan belt?” And then the mechanic is exposed.

Knowledge as a source of division rather than unity

Now, What about the leadership of the Jews and Christians. Were they not using knowledge for their advantage? Allah mentions this in following verse:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّائِثُونَ وَالْأَخْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُخْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَخَشَوْنَ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

Indeed We revealed the Taurat to Moses, in which there is guidance and light: By its laws, all the Prophets, who were Muslims, judged those who call themselves Jews and so did the rabbis and jurists of law (from the early believers of those prophets). They were entrusted the protection of Allah's Book and they themselves were witnesses. Have no fear of people; fear Me, and do not sell My revelations for a petty price: those who do not judge by the law which Allah has revealed, are indeed kafirs (unbelievers). (Quran 5:44)

They were using the knowledge as a source of manipulation and for a petty price. So, they did not want this knowledge to be taken away from them; they used that knowledge to keep

the divisions in place as it was through those divisions that they benefited.

Does this phenomenon exist today in the Muslim ummah too? Do you find people using knowledge, Islamic Knowledge, to hold onto to a “market share” and to nullify everybody else's efforts and to literally turn the knowledge of Islam into a cultish industry? Don't we see people around us whose core effort is to increase the population of their own school of thought or sect nullifying any good work that other Muslims may be involved with?

The Prophet ﷺ hopes about apparently “the people of knowledge” (Jews and Christians), were that it should be easy for them to accept the truth. But Allah says, it's actually because of their knowledge that they disagree with each other, out of the urge to rebel against each other.

They used that knowledge as a means of making themselves more arrogant. Knowledge is supposed to make you humble. The end of Surah Isra deals with exactly that. But in their case, their knowledge made them more arrogant. They didn't want to be put down. Why would they accept the supremacy of an Arab messenger, if at all?

MOTIVATION OR DEMOTIVATION?

After this brief discussion on the dual nature of knowledge, let us come back to the passage that we were discussing.

Summarizing the above, we see that apparently there are three big demoralization factors:

1. Mushrikoon (pagans of Makkah) are not going to accept the truth,
2. Those with knowledge, i.e. Jew and Christians, used their knowledge for the exact opposite purposes than what they were supposed to. Instead of coming to guidance, they used that knowledge to further their arrogance.
3. The Prophet ﷺ is thinking about them just like he thought about the people of Taif, 'If they can't become believers, who can? Their children!' But look at what Allah says next: And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord [postponing the penalty] until a specified time, it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt. So, the next generation was doubtful too.

So, he has got three levels of problems; the mushrikoon will not accept, the people of the book have knowledge but they use it for corruption and not for guidance, and their future generations are riddled with doubt too. Problem after problem after problem!

Some of you would be thinking that this section was about motivation. But so far we are only discussing the demotivational factors. Hold on a little and you will know why.

MOTIVATION AMIDST ADVERSITY

One of the most remarkable verses on this subject is the following. These words contain a world inside them. Allah says,

فَالِدْهِكَ فَادْعُ

‘Then for that reason invite,’

What is the Prophet's ﷺ job at the end of the day? Inviting people! That's his job. Allah says that, I have listed before you three major, major, problems with the audience you have in front of you. These are enough for anybody else to say that there is no point to invite them, no purpose! Allah tells the Prophet ﷺ that because these problems are so major, that is why YOU have to invite them and that is why I chose YOU ﷺ!

This is not just any man's job. If the problems were small, it wouldn't need the greatest messenger of all humanity. It is because these problems are so big, you are needed. “Falidhalik fadoo”.

What is the motivation given to the Prophet ﷺ here? The motivation given isn't, ‘Oh your path is going to be easy, they are going to accept what you say right away, don't worry

about it". No! That's not how he has been given the motivation. The motivation to him is that 'these are the toughest crowds anybody has ever got and you will deal with them directly'. Some of the previous prophets dealt with the mushrikoon; some dealt with the people of the book; one dealt with one problem; the other with another problem. Some dealt with the ignorant; some dealt with the arrogant; and some dealt with the knowledgeable. Isa (A.S.) dealt with the people of the book. Zakariya (A.S.) dealt with the people of the book. But this Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had to deal with everybody and the worst of all, he had to deal with them directly. And Allah swt says, 'That's why YOU have been chosen!'

ARE OUR PROBLEMS TOO BIG?

So what am I telling you and myself? If you look around, this is coming back to us! When Muslims get together for dinner, Eid, parties, tea and so on and so forth, what do we discuss? Problems! We love discussing problems! We are worried about what the government of a particular country is doing; what are the next plans of Jews, how the politicians are wrong and so on. We love discussing problems. And you know, some of us are seasoned problem experts. We have spent our entire life discussing problems. Yes, there are huge problems. But Allah decided that you and I will be alive in this era and time around all those problems. In the same way every generation

of Muslims which Allah raised saw problems around them. Yes, they did. Allah raises generations of Muslims that He knows are qualified to solve the problems. It is because of those problems that you and I exist. Because these problems have to be solved, you and I have been given air to breathe and food to eat. That's why we are here. Have courage to accept this. 'Stand firm as you have been commanded'.

Don't buckle because you see problems. Don't follow their empty desires. Don't be demoralised because all your opponents want is for you not to be motivated! So you should stop worrying about this.

'And tell them, I've been commanded, I've come to believe in whatever Allah revealed in his book.'

To you are your works and to us are our works.

WE ARE ALL HERE WITH A MISSION

Allah revealed that he charged me with this mission and I have to invite. So I'll invite, whether someone listens or not. I am going to do what I am going to do. This is what Quran is saying, 'We have our deeds and you have your deeds.' That means you can keep doing all the evil deeds you want. You can keep sending trillions of dollars on your propaganda, go ahead. We are going to do whatever we are going to do. We are not going to give up. That's **لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ**, 'To you your works, and to us our works.' You do what you are going to do,

you can call on all the forces of shaytan and do whatever you want, we will do our work. That's the stand of the Muslim. That's the stand he takes. That's the motivation for us to do volunteering for Islamic work!

PROBLEMS ARE THERE TO MAKE US STRONGER:

The point, I hope, I am getting across to all of you is that, it is because of these problems that Allah chose this ummah. The problems around us shouldn't be a reason for us to complain or become passive or inactive or withdrawn.

The problems around us are supposed to get us to roll up our sleeves and buckle our belts and get us to work for a serious effort. The problems should make us more serious. 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going.'

We all come across situations that can make us get really depressed. We see poverty, ignorance, carefree attitude and what not. But it all depends on how you perceive it. You don't have to get depressed. You can come back with more resolve to do more work to improve the situation. That means, we are not doing enough work and more work needs to get done. Allah would never leave us hopeless. He will never leave us without his aid. If we were willing to do his work, things will change. The 'barakah' from Allah will come. That's what we have to believe in. That's the motivation you and I share.